



A GEM

formerly in Burn-Sinclair's collection.

at present
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DESCRIPTION
OF THE
ALLEGORY,
PAINTED FOR THE
CURTAIN
OF THE
KING'S THEATRE,
PANTHEON.

O Music ! Sphere-descended Maid,
Friend of Pleasure, Wisdom's aid. COLLINS.

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1791.



DESCRIPTION
OF THE
ALLEGORY, &c.

THE clearest efforts of the Pencil require Elucidation ; it is for this reason that Catalogues, descriptive, or embellished with apt quotations, have been introduced, and approved.

If the direct path of Historical Painting demands a Beacon for a guide, a Clue is more immediately required to conduct us through the maze of Allegory.

To many lovers of the polite Arts the mere mention of an Allegory is alarming; they dread a sacrifice of Intellect at the shrine of Imagination, and suppress curiosity, rather than embark with the Painter in a passage through Chaos.

The abuse of an Art cannot be defended, and that Allegory has been abused may be proved from very high authority: the accusations are, that Professors, by mistaking the fount of information, have been either frivolous or extravagant, and almost always obscure. * Mr. Spence is of opinion, that "the Allegories of the Antients, where they are well settled, might be of very great service to Artists;"---"Propriety, and Simplicity, are their distinguishing characters:" materials selected from this Source, with an attempt to combine them on these Principles, gave birth to the composition of this Curtain, the subject of which is, an EULOGIUM on MUSIC, dedicated to the memory of that great Lyrick Poet METASTASIO.

The Harmony of the Universe is an †Antient, and a received, opinion; an idea so sublime could not fail of

* Polymetis.

† Pliny, Lib. 2. Cap. 22.

warming the imagination of Poets and Sculptors: the *Mundi Harmonia* has been handed down to us on Gems *; and our enthusiastic Bard, whom no theme of sublimity has escaped, bids us

“ —— Look, how the floor of heaven
 “ Is thick inlay'd with pattens of bright gold ;
 “ There's not the smalleſt orb, which thou behold'ſt,
 “ But in his motion like an angel sings,
 “ Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims.”

To express the Music of the Spheres, the seven Planets are personified; this Groupe, in full concert, occupies the upper region of the Picture: to each figure has been given a musical Instrument of claffical description; the whole assemblage enveloped

“ —— With the majesty of darkness round,”
 except where, from breaks in the maffes, a part of the Zodiac is visible.

Beneath, on gayer Clouds, are the Profeffors who have enriched the Science of Music; *Pergoleſe, Handel, Bach* and *Sacchini*; these distinguished Composers are seated with

* See the Frontispiece.

*APOLLO and the MUSES, by whose inspiration they have imparted to Mortals a portion of Celestial Harmony, the influence of which is so universal, that

“ — Nought so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
“ But Music for the time doth change his nature.”

Near to APOLLO, and illumined by his Rays, stands our own immortal SHAKSPEAR: with the dignity of a Prophet, he points to a Scroll, where (in letters of gold) are inscribed his apposite lines

“ THE MAN THAT HATH NO MUSIC IN HIMSELF,
“ NOR IS NOT MOV'D WITH CONCORD OF SWEET SOUNDS,
“ IS FIT FOR TREASONS, STRATAGEMS, AND SPOILS.”

Two *Genii*, floating in the Air, sustain this inscription.

Descending to the lower arrangement of the piece, the foreground displays the effects of MUSIC exemplified on the PASSIONS. The *Sombre* group is composed of *Melancholy*,

* Apollo Lyristes, the proper companion of the Muses, always represented draped.

*Deinde inter matrem deus ipse interque sororem
Pythius in longâ carmina veſte ſonat.*

PROPERTIUS.

See a Medal of Augustus, and one of Nero, also a fine Statue in the Vatican Museum, and another at Stockholm in the King of Sweden's Gallery.

Fear, Despair, Anger, Revenge, “dejected Pity at his side,” and *Jealousy* tormented between *Affection* and *Hatred*: *Hope* points to the contrasted scene, where

“ *Love* frames with *Mirth* a gay fantastic round,”

and *Liberty*, and *Laughter*, with a sprightly train, exult in the rapture of exhilarating Melody.

L’Allegro of MILTON has been consulted; but, for the general Idea of this selection, the Painter is indebted to COLLINS’ inimitable Ode on the Passions, varying from, or adhering to, his Imagery, as it suited the Subject, or coincided with the personifications of the Antients.

* A writer, who has investigated the history of the Italian Stage, declares, that a serious Opera properly arranged, and perfect in ALL its combinations, is “ *Senza dubbio il maggiore sforzo delle belle Arti congiunte.* ” To give perfection to a dignified portion of this combined excellence, remained for the Muse of METASTASIO: his Scenes display a system of morals put into action; and the happy Bard, in his easy enchanting Numbers, borrows

* *Le Revoluzione del Teatro Musicale Italiano*, by STEFANO ARTEAGA.

the language of the Heart to enforce the precepts of Reason.

"Tis the pride of Englishmen to unite the most zealous Patriotism with that impartial Philosophy which teaches to generalize the Sentiments. With us, Stranger and Barbarian are not synonymous. The distinction of Foreigner is lost in the blaze of extraordinary abilities: warmed by this pervading principle, we consecrate our Labour to the *Manes* of a Roman Bard, and name the Curtain

THE
APOTHEOSIS OF METASTASIO.

His portrait is in the centre of the Picture, looking up, and listening with admiration to the MUSIC of the SPHERES: he bears with him that LYRE to which he so pathetically has sung, and whose power he so justly describes!

Quella Cetra ah! pur tu sei,
Che addolcì gli affanni miei,
Che d'ogni alma a suo talento
D'ogni cor la via s'aprì !

